



WESTERN ROAD C.P.SCHOOL

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Newsletter — Friday, 8th September 2017 Issue No: 1

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to school. It has been lovely to see you and the children again this week.

At the beginning of the week I led a presentation to our staff, recognising some of the school's achievements last year and highlighting what I see as our main areas for development this year. I have included it below and hope you find it of interest. If you have any questions about any of the issues covered in the presentation, please don't hesitate to ask me about them.

During the week beginning 18th September we are holding welcome evenings in the classrooms – a chance for you to meet your child's new teacher and find out about the learning for the term and the year ahead. It will be lovely to see you if you are able to come to these (please see dates below).

Matthew's presentation to staff, INSET September 2017

Welcome back everyone and a special welcome to Laura who starts in Year 1 this year and Chris, who officially joins our staff and will be working in Year 5 with Sherry.

This morning I'd like to "take stock" as it were of where we are as a school. I want to spend some time reflecting on some of our very significant achievements over the last couple of years and in particular during this last year. And I'd also like to highlight what I see as some of our key areas for development this year. Most of these areas in fact won't be new, but rather will be continuing with and building on much of last year's work.

I want to start by looking at our children's academic performance at the end of last year by sharing the school's recently published data with you. This is of course only one measure of success, but an important one nonetheless.

In EYFS 82% of children achieved a Good Level of Development. This was the same as last year and is significantly above the national and County averages for the year. Karen and Ruth are a formidable team and you only have to go into the Reception classroom to get a sense of how effectively they work together - it is no accident that our Reception class is oversubscribed this year.

In Year 1, just over 82% of the children achieved the phonics screening check. This was a little down on last year, but as with Early Years, above both national and County averages. And once again, this set of results is a real testament to the way in which Sophie, Emma and Kate worked closely together last year supporting individual children with extra reading practice and catch-up programmes.

Our Year 2 SATs results were also very impressive, with 83% of children in Year 2 attaining the expected standard or better in Reading, Writing and maths combined. This was slightly better than last year and significantly better than both national and County averages. I think it's worth saying too that whilst Years 2 SATs are internally marked, this

year the children's work was externally moderated by one of the Local Authority's moderators, who validated all our assessments and I'd like to thank Chris for the hard work which went into preparing for that exercise. I also think it's worth commenting on the manner in which the Year 2 SATs were carried out. It is a matter of debate as to whether 7 year olds should do SATs at all, but Chris and Linda administered these assessments with such sensitivity and professionalism that the children were completely put at ease and some were even disappointed when the week came to an end.

And finally I'd like to comment on the Year 6 SATs. 80% of our children in Year 6 achieved the expected standard or better in Reading, 83% in writing and 77% in maths. All of these outcomes are above national and County averages, especially the Reading and the Writing which are significantly above.

This is mirrored in the children's progress data too. Progress from the end of KS 1 to the end of KS 2 was significantly above expected progress in Reading and Writing and in line with expected progress in maths. In other words, our children continue to make relatively better progress in Reading and Writing than in maths (and I'll say a little more about this later).

Once again, I'd like to thank the Year 6 team of teachers and teaching assistants (Kerry, Irena, Rachel, Emma and Sherry) for the all hard work which went into not just the teaching, but the catch up programmes and one to one interventions, all of which made these very strong outcomes possible.

Irena and I will be sharing a more detailed analysis of our school's data with our Governors next week, but overall our data shows that the school continues to perform very well academically, thanks to your hard work and that of our children.

What is absolutely foundational to children's success is having a curriculum that is fit for purpose and this year we have made very significant strides towards developing a curriculum which I believe is genuinely exciting and engaging. We have now put in place a new Curriculum Overview for KS 1 and KS 2 to ensure continuity and progression across the school and as teachers I know you have worked extremely hard to prepare termly Units of Work and weekly plans to support this curriculum. Planning is always ongoing and developing detailed plans to ensure all groups of learners keep making good progress will continue to be a priority for us this year.

Our new curriculum has been further enriched with a number exciting educational visits for all year groups, such as the Year 3 visit to The Globe Theatre, the Year 4 visit to the Hindu Mandir in Neasden and the Year 6 visit to the Imperial War Museum, to name just three. These visits have been made possible thanks to the support the school receives from Friends, who last year also subsidised yoga lessons, a number of our new electronic white boards and a range of additional resources to enhance the children's learning, such the sandpit and mud kitchen for our Early Years outdoor area.

The curriculum has also been enhanced by our curriculum focus weeks – maths week, art week, science week and even a healthy living week. These have been hugely successful, not least of all because so many parents and grandparents were involved and in some ways I think these events represent Western Road at its best.

The children love it when they can share their learning with their families and this year, in addition to our curriculum focus weeks, we've added a number of work sharing afternoons to the school calendar. These will be opportunities for parents to come in to their children's classrooms and find out about their learning through talking and looking at their books.

Significant progress has been made in all Curriculum areas. But I would like to highlight just a few examples of curriculum development last year. Perhaps one of the most exciting developments was around the use of Talk for Writing strategies. Judith and Sherry led a number of staff meetings looking at ways in which we can make our

teaching of writing more effective by basing it on model texts and giving children opportunities to internalise and play with words and phrases before using them in their own writing. This step-by-step, structured approach to writing, with teachers and TAs modelling the writing process for the children to see, is beginning to really show results and this year it will be important to embed these strategies in our planning and teaching through sharing best-practice with one another.

Two other areas of the curriculum, sometimes overlooked, but which I believe have improved very considerably last year are music and P.E. This has been entirely due to Nem's passionate leadership of these subjects. Our weekly singing assemblies, which the children love, and the after school choir club have had a huge impact in the school and I know that Nem has very ambitious plans for the choir this year.

The standard of PE in the school too has risen noticeably, both in terms of PE lessons and our children's participation and success in a range of local competitive events. This year Linda Goode, our specialist PE instructor, will continue to support staff through planning and team-teaching to ensure this continues. Our hugely successful Sports Day last year, I think, is symbolic of the progress we have made in P.E.

Real progress has been made too in the area of PSHE and circle time. The social and emotional aspects of learning - teaching children strategies to manage their emotions, raise their self-esteem and help them to relate positively to one another has perhaps never been more important in schools. Kerry has worked very hard to put in place a comprehensive PSHE programme, including a Relationships and Sex Policy with information for parents, and will continue to give advice and training to staff this year. And linked to PSHE, I believe we have taken important steps to give our children, especially our older children, greater opportunities for leadership roles in the school. The buddy system for example, has had a very powerful impact at lunch times, with our Year 5s and 6s leading our younger children in a range of playtime activities, supported by our teaching assistants, and I know Kerry is keen to do more work in this area too.

I have already spoken about our children's relatively slower progress in maths across KS 2 and I know that Chris has already begun a number of initiatives to start to address this – early morning maths, the use of maths working walls, sharing planning resources with colleagues, to name just a few. But these take time to embed and yield results and this work too will be ongoing this year.

Of course the curriculum doesn't develop without the commitment of each Subject Leader and in small schools this can be difficult where individual members of staff may have responsibility for more than one curriculum area. Last year the quality of Subject Leadership improved very considerably, so that now each subject area has its own action plan and clear priorities for development. Subject Leaders have identified gaps in resources and have begun to use their budgets to address these. A number of policies, such as the school's new handwriting policy, have been developed and shared with staff and in almost all cases Subject Leaders have organised or personally led staff training and supported colleagues with advice and guidance in numerous different ways. Your ongoing work as Subject Leaders will be essential this year as our curriculum continues to improve.

Another exciting area where we have begun to make progress is the way in which we have started to use Bloom's Taxonomy to develop a consistent language for learning across the school. We are still in the early stages of this initiative and quite appropriately some members of staff are further than others in terms of integrating Bloom's Taxonomy into their planning and teaching. This approach has huge potential to give children the skills they need to talk about and understand their learning – what's called meta-cognition – and to develop higher order thinking skills. Studies have shown that using Bloom's in this way can really accelerate children's learning, so this year I would like us to explore some simple ways of embedding Bloom's more widely across the school.

Finally, I'd also like to say a few words about our teaching assistants and the work that you do. The expectations of this role have changed beyond recognition since I began teaching. As well as supporting the teaching and learning in

the classroom, making resources, looking after children at lunch time and all that goes with that, you lead intervention programmes and are often asked to work with some of our most vulnerable children. I am pleased that we have been able to provide some specialist training and support from outside agencies such as the Language Support Service and from Linda Goode and I want you to know that the governors and I are committed to your ongoing professional development and one of our priorities this year will be to ensure this is continued and extended.

So these are just some areas in which the school has made very significant and important progress last year and which we will continue to build on this year. I'm aware that I certainly haven't mentioned everything - I could easily talk more about the assemblies programme, the transition programme with the nurseries which Ruth and Karen have begun to put in place, the school spellings programme which Judith has set up, to name just a few other important developments.

But in addition to these areas of development, there are just two more, specific areas I'd like us to work on this year.

When I started two years ago the school's behaviour policy had quite recently been introduced and in many ways it has served us well. However, in some respects we have now moved beyond it. Some of the strategies used in KS 1 for example (I'm thinking of the use of the Sun, the Rainbow and the Rain cloud) have proved very effective, but are not currently part of our policy. All behaviour policies need to be revisited periodically and I believe it's time that we take another look at our approach to behaviour management in the school to see if we can't achieve a greater degree of clarity and consistency. It will be important to create a policy which is more than a mere a list of extrinsic rewards and sanctions. We must also recognise our responsibility to build caring relationships with the children (something which I think is one of our real strengths) and to carefully plan and teach lessons which are appropriately challenging and engaging. I would very much like to involve all our stakeholders in this process through staff meetings, the Parents' Forum, the School Council and our governors.

The other new initiative I'd like us to explore this year is the introduction of mindfulness. Mindfulness has become increasingly popular in schools in recent years and colleagues with experience of using it claim that it brings measurable benefits to the classroom. I have therefore arranged for two exploratory workshops this year (one in November and one in March) where we will be shown a range of techniques which we can use with the children. Then, if we feel that these have been helpful, we can consider adopting a more structured approach as other schools have and there are many examples of programmes we can look at. I also think it would be useful to invite parents to these workshops since the techniques we will be shown can be used both at school and at home.

So, looking forward to this year, our key areas for development which will form the core of this year's school development plan will therefore include the following:

To continue to strengthen our curriculum through strong Subject Leadership (this will again include presentations to governors, which were so helpful and impressive last year);

To continue to develop and resource units of work to support our curriculum, including differentiated weekly planning to ensure all groups of learners, including our most vulnerable, continue to make good progress;

To provide professional development opportunities for our teaching assistants who form an invaluable part of our teaching teams and to ensure they are properly equipped to support our vulnerable children, many of whom come us with increasingly complex learning needs;

To continue to focus on accelerating maths progress in KS 2 through sharing best practice and team-teaching, focusing on developing children's reasoning skills and incorporating the use of more concrete resources in our lessons, such as Numicon for example;

To develop and extend the buddy system, so that under the supervision of adults, older children will continue to play a leading role in supporting our younger classes and help to ensure they have happy and successful playtimes and lunch times;

To embed Talk for Writing Strategies in our English planning and writing lessons and to share best practice across the school through staff meetings and team-teaching;

To use Bloom's Taxonomy to continue to develop a common language for learning, to help children understand the learning process and to develop higher order thinking skills in our classes;

To review and update our behaviour policy;

And to explore a number of mindfulness techniques with our children to enhance concentration, learning and well-being.

These measures represent a bespoke programme for our school to address our unique areas for development. And although I have described each initiative separately, really they are all connected, they all form part of the same intention – to continue to improve teaching and learning, which is our core purpose.

Through building on the excellent progress we have already made, each of us has an important role to play this year to ensure our school continues to go from strength to strength:

to help make Western Road a school where all children thrive because the quality of teaching is consistently good or outstanding;

where children grow in confidence and faith in their own abilities;

where their achievements are celebrated and where they are offered an infinity of opportunities to succeed;

where they have fun and where they can fall in love with learning;

where they feel they have a voice and where they feel safe;

a school where we all take responsibility for fostering relationships based on trust and respect;

a school where the adults work together in a spirit of cooperation and friendship, learning from and helping each other in our daily work;

a school that is genuinely outward-facing and committed to working in partnership with our parents and colleagues from other local schools,

a school where we all feel we belong.

Matthew Montebello

September 2017

Other News

Reminder

If your child uses any form of medication, for example inhalers, please speak with Mrs Winter in the School Office (01273 473013 or office@westernroad.e-sussex.sch.uk) as a form needs to be completed, even for self-medication of inhalers.

Term One After-School Clubs (3.45pm – 4.45pm)

Monday	Choir with Miss Hoare (Key Stage Two, starts 18.9.17)
Tuesday	Dance with Mrs Goode (Years One to Six, starts 13.9.17)
Wednesday	Netball with Mrs Goode (Years Four to Six, starts 13.9.17)
Thursday	Football with Premier Sports (Years One to Six, starts 13.9.17)

Information leaflets about clubs run by Mrs Goode are available in the school Reception. If you have any queries about Choir Club, please see Miss Hoare. If you have queries about Football Club, please visit <http://sport.premier-education.com>

Key Dates 2017 – 2018

Week beginning 18 th September 2017	Year Six Bikeability
Monday, 18 th September 2017	Year Two Welcome Meeting (3.30pm – 4.15pm)
Tuesday, 19 th September 2017	Year Three Welcome Meeting (3.30pm – 4.15pm)
	Year Four Welcome Meeting (3.30pm – 4.15pm)
Thursday, 21 st September 2017	Year Five Welcome Meeting (3.30pm – 4.15pm)
	Year Six Welcome Meeting (3.30pm – 4.15pm)
Friday, 22 nd September 2017	Year One Welcome Meeting (3.30pm – 4.15pm)
Wednesday, 27 th September 2017	Year Six trip to the Imperial War Museum, London
Tuesday, 3 rd October 2017	Parents' Evening (3.30pm – 6.30pm)
Thursday, 5 th October 2017	Parents' Evening (4.30pm – 7.30pm)
Week beginning 9 th October 2017	Art Week
Thursday, 12 th October 2017	Children's art from Art Week on display in Hall (from 3pm)
Thursday, 19 th October 2017	FOWR Halloween Discos (timings TBA)
Friday, 20 th October 2017	End of Term 1
Monday, 30 th October 2017	Start of Term 2
Week beginning 13 th November 2017	Anti-Bullying Week
Friday, 15 th December 2017	EYFS/KS1 Nativity to parents and carers (2pm)
Tuesday, 19 th December 2017	Carols around the tree (10am)

Term One Assemblies

Friday, 15 th September 2017 3pm	Celebration Assembly (3pm)
Friday, 29 th September 2017	Celebration Assembly (9.15am please note change of time)
Friday, 6 th October 2017	Harvest Festival (10am)
Friday, 20 th October 2017	Celebration Assembly (3pm)

INSET days 2017 – 2018: Tuesday, 2nd January 2018, Wednesday, 3rd January 2018, Monday, 4th June 2018